CLAIMS

1.   A system, comprising:

a computing device that includes one or more components each configured to perform a function in response to an input from an associated external device; and

an input/output module configured for installation within a housing of the computing device, the input/output module including one or more input/output connectors configured to interface one or more associated external devices with the one or more components in the computing device, the input/output module further configured to pass one or more unmodified signals between the one or more components and the one or more associated external devices.

2.   A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the computing device includes a second component configured to perform a second function in response to an input from a second external device, the system further comprising:

a second input/output module configured to be interchangeable with the input/output module and including at least one input/output connector configured to interface the second external device with the second component, the input/output modules having at least one different connector; and

wherein the second input/output module is configured to pass one or more unmodified signals between the second external device and the second component.

3. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the computing device includes a second component configured to perform a second function in response to an input from a second external device, the system further comprising:

a second input/output module configured to be interchangeable with the input/output module and including at least first and second input/output connectors to interface both external devices with the computing device; and

wherein the second input/output module is configured to pass one or more unmodified signals between the one or more components and the one or more associated external devices.

4. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein:

the input/output module includes multiple input/output connectors each configured to interface an external device with the computing device, the input/output module further configured to pass at least one input from an external device unmodified to a component in the computing device; and

the input/output module includes a signal processing component to process an input from an external device, the input/output module further configured to pass at least one processed input from the input/output module to the computing device.

5.   A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the input/output module comprises one or more of:

a CRT/DVI (digital video input) input/output connector;

a parallel input/output connector;

a serial input/output connector;

a USB (universal serial bus) input/output connector; and

a PS/2 (personal system) input/output connector.

6.   A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the input/output module comprises one or more of:

a CRT/DVI (digital video input) input/output connector;

an IEEE 1394 input/output connector;

a TV-out connector;

an S-Video out connector; and

at least one USB (universal serial bus) input/output connector.

7.   A system as recited in claim 1, wherein:

the input/output module comprises one or more of:

a CRT/DVI (digital video input) input/output connector;

a parallel input/output connector;

a serial input/output connector;

a USB (universal serial bus) input/output connector;

a PS/2 (personal system) input/output connector;

the system further comprises a second input/output module configured to be interchangeable with the input/output module, the second input/output module comprising one or more of:

a CRT/DVI (digital video input) input/output connector;

an IEEE 1394 input/output connector;

a TV-out connector;

an S-Video out connector; and

at least one USB (universal serial bus) input/output connector.

8.   A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the computing device does not allocate system resources for the one or more components that can not be interfaced with an external device via the input/output module.

9.   A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the computing device is configured to reserve system resources that would otherwise be allocated to interface the one or more components with an associated external device via the input/output module if the input/output module does not have an input/output connector for the external device.

10.   A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the input/output module includes an input/output connector configuration that the computing device can obtain from the input/output module.

11.   A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the input/output module includes a memory device to store an input/output connector configuration, and wherein the computing device can obtain the input/output connector configuration stored in the memory device.

12.   A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the input/output module includes a module connector having a pin configuration that can be decoded by the computing device to determine an input/output connector configuration on the input/output module.

13.   A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the computing device de-allocates system resources from the one or more components that can not be interfaced with an external device via the input/output module.

14.   At least one interchangeable input/output module configured for installation within a computer, the interchangeable input/output module comprising one or more input/output connectors supported by a module housing, each of which are configured to interface an external device with a component in the computer, at least one of the input/output connectors being configured to pass unmodified signals between its associated external device and its associated component.

15. At least one interchangeable input/output module as recited in claim 14, wherein the module housing is configured to be removably attached to the computer.

16. At least one interchangeable input/output module as recited in claim 14, further comprising:

multiple input/output connectors each configured to interface an external device with a component in the computer; and

a signal processing component to process an input from an external device, the interchangeable input/output module further configured to pass at least one unmodified input from an external device to an associated component in the computer, and further configured to pass at least one processed input from an external device to an associated component in the computer.

17. At least one interchangeable input/output module as recited in claim 14, wherein the one or more input/output connectors comprise one or more of:

a CRT/DVI (digital video input) input/output connector;

a parallel input/output connector;

a serial input/output connector;

a USB (universal serial bus) input/output connector; and

a PS/2 (personal system) input/output connector.

18.   At least one interchangeable input/output module as recited in claim 14, wherein the one or more input/output connectors comprise one or more of:

a CRT/DVI (digital video input) input/output connector;

an IEEE 1394 input/output connector;

a TV-out connector;

an S-Video out connector; and

at least one USB (universal serial bus) input/output connector.

19.   At least one interchangeable input/output module as recited in claim 14, further comprising an input/output connector configuration identifier from which the computer can obtain an input/output connector configuration of the input/output module.

20.   At least one interchangeable input/output module as recited in claim 19, wherein the input/output connector configuration identifier comprises a memory storage device configured to store the input/output connector configuration and communicate the input/output connector configuration to the computer.

21.   At least one interchangeable input/output module as recited in claim 19, wherein the input/output connector configuration identifier is decoded from a pin configuration in the input/output module.

22. A method, comprising:

providing an input/output module configured for installation within a housing of a computer that contains multiple components each of which interface with different external devices; and

providing multiple different input/output connectors supported by the input/output module, at least some of the input/output connectors being configured to couple an external device and an associated component in the computer and pass signals in an unmodified form between the external device and its associated component.

23. A method as recited in claim 22, further comprising establishing a connection between the input/output module and the computer that contains at least one component that can be interfaced through the input/output module to an associated external device.

24. A method as recited in claim 22, wherein the input/output connectors comprise one or more of the following:

a CRT/DVI (digital video input) input/output connector;

a parallel input/output connector;

a serial input/output connector;

a USB (universal serial bus) input/output connector; and

a PS/2 (personal system) input/output connector.

25.   A method as recited in claim 22, wherein the input/output connectors comprise one or more of the following:

a CRT/DVI (digital video input) input/output connector;

an IEEE 1394 input/output connector;

a TV-out connector;

an S-Video out connector; and

at least one USB (universal serial bus) input/output connector.

26.   A method, comprising:

receiving an input from an external device via an input/output connector on an interchangeable input/output module that is installed within a housing of a computing device; and

passing the input in an unmodified form through the input/output module to a component in the computing device.

27.   A method as recited in claim 26, further comprising:

receiving a second input from a second external device with a second input/output connector on the interchangeable input/output module;

processing the second input with a signal processing component in the interchangeable input/output module to generate a processed input;

passing the processed input from the signal processing component in the input/output module to a component in the computing device.

28.   A   method   as   recited   in   claim   26,   further   comprising communicating   an   input/output   connector   configuration   on   the interchangeable input/output module to the computing device.

29.   A method as recited in claim 26, further comprising reserving system resources that would otherwise be allocated to interface a computing device   component   with   an   external   device   via   the   interchangeable input/output module if the interchangeable input/output module does not have an input/output connector for the external device.